



Active Michigan Communities

Fall 2007

Welcome

I hope you are taking some walks to enjoy the beauty of Michigan's fall. The colors have been spectacular this year and there's no better way to enjoy it than to be out on one of our hundreds of miles of trails, thousands of miles of shoreline and many more miles of sidewalks through our community's neighborhoods.

As children are back in the swing of school, we trust that your community has already embraced Walk to School Day (and if not, it's never too late) and is seeking opportunities to continue strengthening your walking and biking infrastructure. In this issue you can read about a neighborhood in Detroit that is working to be an active community of choice. Find out about a new report showing that the same solutions needed to create an active community will also help address climate change. Tap into multiple resources for your work on complete streets and pedestrian safety. And finally, we offer our heartiest congratulations to the Michigan Department of Transportation for receiving the first James L. Oberstar Award for the exemplary establishment of the Michigan Safe Routes to School Program. Happy Fall!

Risa Wilkerson
Vice President of Active Communities
Governor's Council on Physical Fitness
517-347-7891
rwilkerson@michiganfitness.org
www.michiganfitness.org



Community Spotlight: Detroit Focus: HOPE Neighborhood

The City of Detroit~ Focus: HOPE Neighborhood is located in the heart of Detroit and exemplifies an urban core neighborhood working to become an active living community.

- The Neighborhood used the Promoting Active Communities (PAC) Program to evaluate assets and to identify barriers to active living. The results will help the neighborhood to effectively allocate resources to create an active living community and a neighborhood of choice- one where people want to and choose to live.
- A group of 30 neighborhood stakeholders conducted a one-day Walkability Audit of the neighborhood, and developed ideas for improvements to make the neighborhood more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly. This is a great hands on approach to learn more about a neighborhood and how community design impacts opportunities for physical activity.
- Neighborhood residents partnered with the Focus: HOPE Foundation to renovate Ford/LaSalle Park. A summer program that encourages children to be physically active is now offered in the park and approximately 30 children participate on any given day.
- A new "Cool Cities Park" is being constructed on the site of a vacant parking lot. During the planning process, public input has been a key component. During the first phase of planning and development, stakeholders from a new low-income senior housing complex adjacent to the park were invited to offer feedback on the park plan. As the second phase begins, more public input will be sought through neighborhood charrettes.



The efforts of this neighborhood to create an active living community illustrates how a community can come together to overcome challenges through implementing innovative strategies.

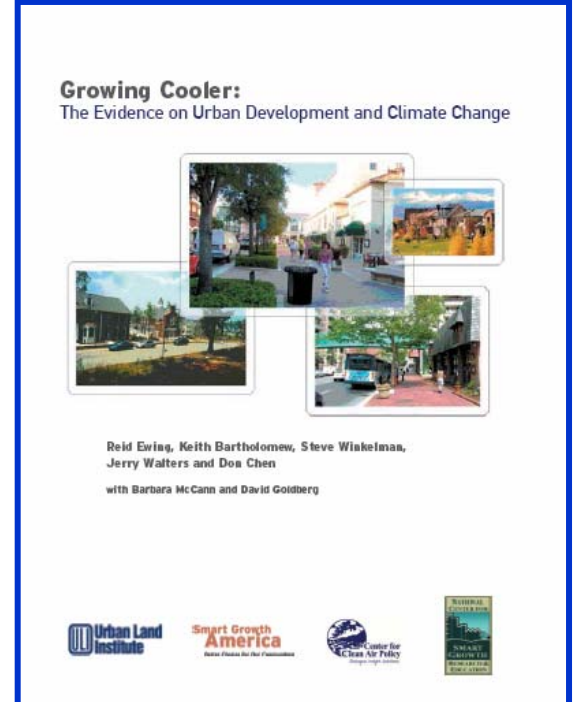
Active Living Communities Combat Climate Change

A new report published by the Urban Land Institute and Smart Growth America states that urban development patterns are driving growth in vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Michigan is no exception. This growth in VMT has resulted in increased levels of CO₂ emissions— one of the major contributors to climate change. The study clearly states that any advances in technology to make vehicles more fuel or emissions efficient most likely will be offset by community design that necessitates travel via automobiles. Therefore, one solution to combat global climate change is to build compact, dense cities that offer plentiful destinations, as well as transportation and housing choices. Communities designed this way reduce CO₂ pollution because residents have the choice to walk, bicycle or use public transportation, instead of driving a car, to get to school, work or to run errands. Issues discussed in the study include:

- Why it is essential to use urban growth strategies to curb CO₂ emissions from automobiles;
- How much transportation-related benefits we can expect to see from creating more compact growth; and
- What policy changes and recommendations will make such growth possible.

Besides reducing air and water pollution to provide a healthier community environment, these communities see improved public health because residents have the opportunity to incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. In essence, communities integrate active living concepts into planning and design to create an environment that is conducive to non-motorized transportation.

For more information about the study, please visit: www.support.smartgrowthamerica.org to download the executive summary, full white paper, or regional data.



Complete Streets Benefits

Have you been looking for information to support your efforts to advocate for a street network that accommodates all users? Well, the Complete Streets Coalition offers some great informational handouts that highlight useful statistics, case studies and heart-warming success stories to bring to life the benefits of Complete Streets. Understanding the many benefits of Complete Streets will help you more effectively build a case for environmental and policy change in regards to active living when you talk with local government officials or other organizations. Not only can you find a handout on the website that provides an overview of Complete Streets benefits, but there are fact sheets that illustrate the benefits that Complete Streets have for:

- Safety
- Children
- People with Disabilities
- Older People
- Health
- Transit

For information about Complete Streets or to download the fact sheets, please visit: www.completestreets.org/benefits.html



Countermeasures Effectiveness on Reduction of Pedestrian Crashes



In September, the Office of Safety under the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) published an “issue brief” as a quick reference on Crash Reduction Factors (CRF) of selected countermeasures for pedestrian crashes. The issue brief gives estimates of the crash reduction that would be expected if a particular countermeasure is implemented with respect to pedestrian crashes. This reference was created in response to the State Safety Engineers request for a CRF guide. The FHWA hired a consultant to look through pertinent research and list observed crash reduction factors for many safety countermeasures. Signalization countermeasures such as countdown signals can reduce pedestrian crashes by up to 47%. Geometric countermeasures such as installing a median with crosswalks, refuge island, pedestrian overpass or sidewalk along a roadway can reduce pedestrian crashes by up to 90%. Sign or other marking countermeasures such as improved lighting at an intersection, stop sign conversion, or adequate signage can reduce pedestrian crashes by up to 78%. Although the issue brief is only a guide based on the best available information of CRFs at the time, this document clearly shows that the implementation of countermeasures to decrease pedestrian crashes can significantly impact the safety of pedestrians. For more information about the issue brief or pedestrian safety, please visit: <http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov>

Traffic Signals Do Not Accommodate Older Pedestrians

A recent study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety in conjunction with the Institute of Transportation Engineers and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. indicated that traffic signals, in many cases, did not allow enough time for aging pedestrians to cross the street. In the six communities involved in the research, if a signal was timed according to the current edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)—the manual that provides Federal standards for all traffic control devices—more than 15 percent of older pedestrians would not have enough time to cross the street.

Right now, one in eight Americans fall into the age bracket of 65 years or older, and the U.S. Census Bureau predicts this to increase to one in five by around 2030. The study concluded that older pedestrians—defined in this study as those aged 65 years and older—tended to walk at least half a foot per second slower than their younger counterparts, and in some places much slower than that. For a busy, six-lane urban street, or a four-lane street with on-street parking, this would mean that an older pedestrian would still have almost another full lane to cross compared to a younger counterpart who would have made it safely across in the allotted time. The MUTCD is scheduled for revision in 2009. This study provides substantial new research findings that should be considered in that revision.

Researchers also performed computer-based traffic simulations to find out whether signal timing could be modified to better accommodate older pedestrians. In most instances, researchers found that modifying the signal timing could be done without causing excessive delays in motor vehicular traffic. At the most congested intersections, modifying signal timing would be more difficult. More research is needed to determine exactly when, where, and how this can and should be done, but these initial results show that the question deserves further attention.

The report “Pedestrian Signal Safety for Older Persons,” is available online at: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/pdf/PEDsigtimingSummary.pdf>



Michigan Communities Honored for Active Living

On Friday, October 19 more than 250 people were at the Michigan Association of Planning's annual awards luncheon to cheer 22 Michigan communities who participated in the Promoting Active Communities (PAC) Program and earned an award for their efforts to become active living communities. Each community earned one of five awards to recognize their efforts to create an active living community where residents can incorporate physical activity into their daily routines. The five levels of recognition are defined as:

- **Copper:** Communities have made a commitment to becoming a healthier place to live and have begun to take steps toward removing barriers to physical activity.
- **Bronze:** Communities have taken important steps toward making it easy for people to be active.
- **Silver:** Communities have achieved significant progress toward making it easy for people to be active.
- **Gold:** Communities can document outstanding achievements in making it easy for people to be active.
- **Platinum:** Communities are models of commitment to healthy, active living.

Copper Award

City of Menominee

Bronze Award

City of Birmingham	City of Ishpeming
City of Cadillac	Village of Kalkaska
City of Charlotte	City of Manistee
City of Detroit-	City of Marquette
Focus: HOPE	City of Montague
Garfield Township	Watervliet Township

Silver Award

Village of Dundee	City of Portland
City of Gladstone	City of Saline
City of Lansing	City of Traverse City
Meridian Township	City of Ypsilanti
City of Midland	

Gold Award

City of Novi

Congratulations to the 2007 PAC Award Recipients!



MDOT Wins National Award for Safe Routes to School Program



The National Center for Safe Routes to School awarded the 2007 James L. Oberstar Award to the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the exemplary establishment of the Michigan Safe Routes to School Program. The award is named for Congressman James Oberstar (D-MN) to honor his dedication to America's school children as the pioneer for the National Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program. Oberstar, current chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, sponsored the federal Safe Routes to School legislation that strives to create safe settings where more parents and children can walk and bicycle to school.

The Michigan SRTS Program demonstrated a number of key program elements that allowed them to lay the groundwork for effective program development. MDOT first established a SRTS Handbook providing tools and guidance to schools planning SRTS strategies. Along with partner organizations and various subcontractors, MDOT is also creating a number of specialized educational modules for specific program participants such as urban and disabled children, who may face special challenges surrounding walking and bicycling to school. Recognizing the need for program support, they also established training and technical assistance programs for schools completing the planning process.

Currently, 60 percent of Michigan's counties have a total of 256 registered schools that are in various stages of completing the planning process. Registered schools become the pool of applicants for State funds and their action plans are the basis for projects for which they request funding. MDOT maintains an open call for applications with no deadline for submittal, allowing each school to proceed at its own pace. According to Congressman Oberstar, "Michigan is setting the pace, and I look forward to seeing this program take root, grow and thrive throughout the country." In July 2005, Congress passed federal legislation that established a national Safe Routes to School program. The program dedicates a total of \$612 million towards Safe Routes to School from 2005 to 2009. These funds are made available to individual States to develop and administer Safe Routes to School Programs.

For more information on the James L. Oberstar Award, please visit:

http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/news_room/oberstar_award/

Walk to School Day a Success



During the month of October, approximately 400 Michigan schools participated in International Walk to School Day. This program is designed to raise awareness about physical activity and safe routes to school in Michigan communities. Many school children used to walk or bike to school, but today less than one-third of those who live within one mile of their school walk or bicycle there. To celebrate the first day of school this year, The Detroit Public School District encouraged children to walk to school. More than 200 children participated and Governor Granholm was there to cheer on participants. The children that walk or bike to school are not only setting an example of how physical activity can be incorporated into daily routines, but are also learning healthy habits to last a lifetime.

For more information about Walk to School Day or Safe Routes to School, please contact the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness at (800) 434-8642 or visit www.michiganfitness.org.

SAVE THE DATE

4th Annual Designing Healthy Livable Communities Conference

May 29-30, 2008





MICHIGAN FITNESS FOUNDATION

P.O. Box 27187

Lansing, MI 48909

Phone: (800) 434-8642

Fax: (517) 347-8145

www.michiganfitness.org

About Us

The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports was established in 1992 to improve the health of, and increase physical activity among, Michigan residents. The Michigan Fitness Foundation was created in 1994 as a 501(c)3 nonprofit public charity foundation to expedite Governor's Council policies and programs and provide a broader funding base to pursue its mission of Getting Michigan Moving. The foundation is licensed by the Michigan Attorney General to solicit and receive charitable gifts and grants (MICS 11523).

Our Mission

The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness, Health and Sports envisions a physically educated population with the knowledge and skills to enjoy a healthy, vigorous and safe lifestyle in communities designed to support physical activity.

Endorsed Physical Activity Events

Get the Governor's Council's seal of approval on your event! The organization endorses events that encourage physical activity in communities across the state. Physical activity events that range from running races to softball tournaments are eligible to be endorsed by the Governor's Council. Having your event endorsed is free, and gives you additional publicity through the Governor's Council website! Do you have an event that you think could be endorsed by the Governor's Council or do you want to find events that have already been endorsed? Visit <http://www.michiganfitness.org/endorsements/index.php>. If you have questions about the endorsement program, contact Tricia Fraas at (800) 434-8642 or tfraas@michiganfitness.org.

Resources

Healthy Communities ToolKit. Creating healthy communities means changes to the physical environment, establishing policies that support healthy community and promoting social change. This booklet, produced by the Michigan Department of Community Health, provides guidelines and ideas for implementing all these changes. Available at: http://www.mihealthtools.org/documents/HealthyCommunitiesToolkit_web.pdf

Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation, Smart Growth Network, 2002. Available at www.smartgrowth.org. The guide provides 100 suggestions on how to implement smart community growth. Chapter topics include mixing land uses, designing compact buildings, choosing a range of housing opportunities, creating walkable communities, preserving open space, and providing transportation options

Working with the media, Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. Available at: www.bicyclinginfo.org. Getting your issues into the mainstream press isn't as difficult as it seems. This website offers a brief guide to media relations including press releases, news conferences as well as other advocacy resources.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Data Collection, The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center and the Federal Highway Administration, 2005. Available at: www.pedbikeinfo.org. This report describes how communities can collect data about bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and includes case studies from 27 communities.

To Subscribe to the Active Michigan Communities Newsletter

Contact Sarah Panken at (800) 434-8642 or
spanken@michiganfitness.org to provide an e-mail address